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HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Crew fell overboard from accommodation ladder of a vessel in Panama Canal

To : Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Classification Societies

Summary

A fatal accident happened onboard a Hong Kong registered ship in Panama Canal. While rigging an accommodation ladder, a seaman fell overboard from the vessel and his falling resulted in his death. This information note draws the attention of Ship owners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Classification Societies to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Accident

1. When a Hong Kong registered ship was transiting the Panama Canal, crewmembers were assigned to rig an accommodation ladder in combination with pilot ladder for the disembarkation of the canal mooring crew and the pilots. In order to fasten removable stanchions with ropes on the accommodation ladder, the seaman stepped on the lower platform of the accommodation ladder. Unfortunately, the lower platform turned over and the seaman fell into the water. Search and rescue operation was carried out after reporting the incident to the canal authority, but in vain. The body of the seaman II was found two days later.
2. Investigation into the incident identified that the shipboard working procedure had not been followed. The seaman working overside of the vessel had not donned the required personal protective equipment, such as inflatable lifejacket and safety belt.
3. Investigation also revealed that lack of the proper maintenance to the accommodation ladder causing the lower platform not to be locked and secured in position properly to avoid turning over while the seaman was stepping on it.

Lessons Learnt

4. The management company of the vessel should ensure the shipboard working procedures are implemented and the maintenance work of accommodation ladder is properly carried out.

5. The attention of Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Classification Societies is drawn to the lessons learnt above.

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